

## Message Text

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61

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ACDA-19 MC-02 OMB-01 SAJ-01 CIAE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00

DRC-01 /138 W

----- 072831

R 211805Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9467

SECDEFENSE WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

USDELMC

UNCLAS BRUSSELS 7447

E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: MASS, BEXP, BE

SUBJECT: REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT FOR BELGIAN AIR FORCE

REF.: BRUSSELS 7369

1. SUMMARY: CLEARLY WELL INFORMED ARTICLE ENTITLED  
"DECISION IN 1974 ON F-104 REPLACEMENT" APPEARED IN BRUSSELS  
CONSERVATIVE DAILY LE SOIR ON DECEMBER 19. BURDEN OF ARTICLE  
IS THAT GOB HAS NOT RPT NOT YET MADE CHOICE DESPITE RECENT  
RUMORS AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ABOUT FRENCH DASSAULT SUPER F-1.  
END SUMMARY.

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2. ARTICLE MENTIONS BELGIAN AIR STAFF TECHNICAL RECOMMENDATION DUE END DECEMBER. IT THEN SAYS THAT OTHER NATO COUNTRIES ARE FACING SAME DECISION, AND BRIEFLY AND ACCURATELY DESCRIBES DUTCH PROPOSAL FOR MISSION SPECIALIZATION. REFERRING TO EXPERIENCE IN RECENT ISRAELI-ARAB WAR LE SOIR CONCLUDES THAT THE REQUIRED CHARACTERISTICS FOR NEW AIRCRAFT ARE HIGH PAYLOAD, RAPID RATE OF CLIMB, MINIMUM MACH 2 SPEED, AND TWO NOT OVER-SOPHISTICATED ENGINES.

3. CANDIDATES UNDER CONSIDERATION BY BAF, ACCORDING TO ARTICLE, ARE MIRAGE F-1 (DESPITE INABILITY TO REACH MACH 2 SPEED), COBRA, LANCER, VIGGEN, AND JAGUAR. ARTICLE COMMENTS THAT VIGGEN IS "NOT WELL PLACED" IN COMPETITION AS SWEDEN IS NOT MEMBER OF EEC OR NATO. HOWEVER, AGAIN ACCORDING TO ARTICLE, REAL CHOICE IS BETWEEN FRENCH MIRAGE AND TWO AMERICAN CANDIDATES, WITH LOCKHEED'S LANCER HAVING "SLIGHT ADVANTAGE" OVER NORTHROP'S COBRA. LOCKHEED'S ADVANTAGE STEMS FROM ITS RECENT COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH ITALIAN MANUFACTURER AERITALIA FOR CONSTRUCTION OF PROTOTYPES WHILE NORTHROP'S INABILITY TO DATE TO FIND A SIMILAR EUROPEAN PARTNER MEANS A DELAY OF "ABOUT THIRTY MONTHS" FOR CONSTRUCTION OF PROTOTYPES FROM DATE OF COOPERATION AGREEMENT.

4. KEY POINT IN ARTICLE IS THAT "AS DASSAULT-BREQUET'S F-1 IS ALREADY IN SERVICE IN FRENCH AIR FORCE AND ONLY REQUIRES COMPLETION OF PRODUCTION ARRANGEMENTS FOR ITS SNECMA M-53 ENGINE, CAN IT BE CONSIDERED AS LEAD CANDIDATE? EVEN IF ITS CHANCES ARE GOOD, IT WOULD BE PRESUMPTUOUS TO ASSUME THAT. IT SHOULD NOT BE BELIEVED, WE WERE TOLD BY THE AIR FORCE, THAT EVERYTHING IS DECIDED AND THAT THERE ONLY REMAINS THE FORMALITY OF AFFIXING TWO SIGNATURES TO A CONTRACT".

5. ARTICLE CONCLUDES WITH OBSERVATION THAT PENDING BELGIAN DECISION WILL BE CLOSELY OBSERVED BY ITS EUROPEAN NEIGHBORS. "IT WILL BE DETERMINED, APART FROM ALL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES, BY THE DESIRE TO REMAIN LOYAL TO OUR ROLE IN THE (NATO) ALLIANCE."

6. COMMENT: ARTICLE IS CLEARLY BASED ON OFFICIAL INFORMATION AND APPEARS DESIGNED TO COUNTERACT RECENT RUMORS THAT FRENCH

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AIRCRAFT HAS ALREADY BEEN CHOSEN, POSSIBLY AS BARGAINING PLOY WITH FRENCH.

STRAUSZ-HUPE

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## Message Attributes

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